

## ARCHAEOLOGY AT 109 – 113 GEORGE STREET, PARRAMATTA

Landcom is seeking to redevelop this site into an outstanding residential apartment complex and set new benchmarks for quality in Western Sydney.

Archaeological excavation is being undertaken at 109-113 George Street, Parramatta, in preparation for the redevelopment. The work is required by the NSW Heritage Council prior to development of the site, to record archaeological relics relating to Colonial heritage and the Department of Environment requires this for Aboriginal heritage.

The archaeological work is being done by two groups. Casey & Lowe Pty Ltd will initially excavate the site to determine the presence of remains associated with Colonial occupation. Once this is completed a team from Jo McDonald Cultural Heritage Management Pty Ltd and representatives from Aboriginal groups will commence work digging for Aboriginal relics.

This site is being redeveloped by **Landcom**. Since 1975 when it was founded as the Land Commission of New South Wales, Landcom has been creating new residential and business communities on vacant land and established sites that deliver social and economic benefits to the people of the State.

Over the past 29 years, Landcom has become a leader in innovative residential, commercial and industrial development and urban design recognising the lifestyle and employment needs of the people of New South Wales.

### ABORIGINAL HISTORY

The Darug Aboriginal people lived at Parramatta before the British came in 1788. The Burramatta, the local group, spoke the Darug language. Parramatta is part of their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. Ducks, mullet, crayfish, shellfish and turtles lived in the freshwater streams feeding into Parramatta River. Fish, shellfish, molluscs and eels lived in the saltwater parts of the river. Shellfish remains found in Aboriginal middens include: rock oysters, cockles, some mud whelks, mud oysters, winks and horn shells. Aboriginal people used canoes made from the bark of the bangalay (*E bitryoides*) or the stringybark tree (*E agglomerates*). The men used

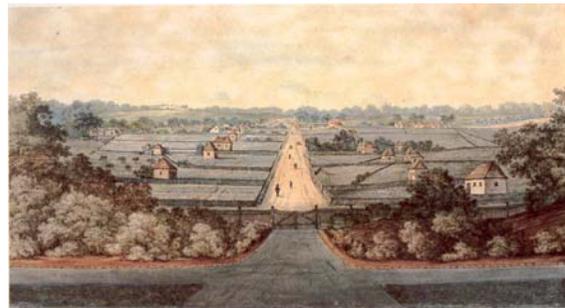
spears and the women shell hooks to catch food from the river.

Aboriginal presence in Parramatta was documented by the British who set out from Sydney Cove to explore the Parramatta River and locate fertile land to grow the crops needed to sustain the new arrivals.

### COLONIAL SETTLEMENT IN PARRAMATTA 1788 to 1810s

Governor Phillip sent out exploring parties to survey Sydney Harbour and the river at its head shortly after landing at Sydney Cove. On Sunday 2 November 1788 Governor Phillip and others, including marines, established a military redoubt at Rose Hill (Parramatta Park). Convicts were sent to Rose Hill to commence farming, as the land was more fertile than at Sydney and Farm Cove (Sydney Botanic Gardens).

With the success of farming at Rose Hill, Phillip decided to expand the settlement. In 1790 Governor Phillip and Surveyor Augustus Alt laid out a town plan with High Street (George Street) running between the planned site of Government House and the Landing Place a mile distant to the east along George Street. Church and Macquarie Street were part of this early street grid.



**George Evans, painting of the view along George Street from Government House, c.1805.**

Initially the relationship between the British settlers and the Aboriginal groups at Parramatta was amicable but as early as September 1790 relations became strained. Pemulway, an Aboriginal 'warrior and tactician', led this resistance. During a confrontation at Parramatta

Pemulway was wounded by musket balls to the head and body. Pemulway survived to escape from the hospital in leg irons.

### 1804 and Obediah Ikin

The 1804 plan of Parramatta indicates the study area was part of land granted to Obediah Ikin, a veteran colonist. He had served for 26 years in the army, of which 20 were in the colony of New South Wales, as well as 12 years as a sergeant of the 102nd Regiment (Rum Corps).

### Rowland Hassall and his Family's House

Rowland Hassall built his house c. 1804, reputedly with bricks imported from England as ship's ballast. Hassall had arrived in Tahiti as a missionary for the London Missionary Society but fled to New South Wales in 1798 after attacks on missionaries. In New South Wales he continued to preach, as well as acquire land and government posts. He was government storekeeper and was in charge of the granary at Parramatta until his dismissal in September 1802 for not discovering fraud. His preaching veered towards Methodism, but he retained a strong working relationship with Anglican priests such as Rev. Samuel Marsden. He confined his preaching to his home in Parramatta where the barn served as the place for services. He also opened a store to supply settlers. In 1814, he was appointed as superintendent of Government Stock.

His acquisitions of land were a boon to his large family. Not only did he endow them with land, he also passed on his religious convictions and fervour. There were to be many ministers with the surname Hassall in New South Wales over the next century.

Hassall's house in Parramatta became a base for the missionaries of the London Missionary Society when they visited Parramatta. In many ways, his home became a pivotal point in the religious network of the colony. Not only did he preach there, he offered hospitality to the visiting clergy and missionaries. In May 1813, his son, Thomas Hassall, opened the first Sunday school in Australia in his father's house in Parramatta.

Additionally, there was a printing press in operation on his premises, a rare and significant piece of equipment in a colony with few printing presses. The output of the press included the *Requirements and Rules for Persons engaging themselves as teachers in the Parramatta Sunday School*, printed in August 1816 at the 'Missionary Press, Parramatta', as well as *Hymns for the Eighth Anniversary of the Parramatta Sunday School*. The surviving copy of these *Hymns* is inscribed with the handwritten notation '1816. Printed at Parramatta at house of Mr R Hassall at the Mission Press Parramatta'. The surviving copy of the *Rules of the New South Wales Sunday School Institution* was probably also printed there.

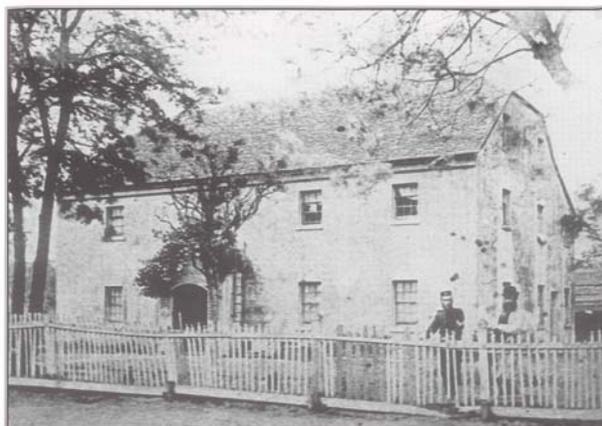
Rowland Hassall died on 31 August 1820. His will mentioned the '**dwelling house at Parramatta, wherein I now reside, with the garden, orchard, yard, buildings, premises and paddocks, now appurtenant thereto**'.

James S. Hassall, son of Thomas Hassall and grandson of Rowland Hassall, wrote about his grandfather's house:

My father had an old-fashioned brick house opposite the school [Harrisford], built by Government for his father – I think at the time when he had charge of the colonial cattle-stations, then all Government property. There was a great mulberry-tree in the garden and the largest English oaks in the colony were there. The property comprised about four acres of land. On a Guy Fawkes' Day, we used to make large bonfires from the dead lemon trees that had formed a hedge around it.

Thomas Hassall (Rowland's son), following the death of his mother in February 1834, claimed this land as a grant from the Crown, but since his title was derived from his father's will, the matter was passed on to the Court of Claims. On 12 May 1836 witnesses were examined attesting to the family's long possession of the property. Rev. William Pascoe Crook stated that he was aware of Hassall building a house in Parramatta in 1804 in George Street and that 'the garden was very extensive'. He remembered that Hassall still held it in 1816. Rev. Ralph Mansfield stated that he had known the property since 1820 when it was held by Rowland Hassall. It was then

held by his widow until her death and it was currently being rented by Hassall to Mr Dickinson. The Hassall family appear to have lived on this property from c. 1804 to 1834 when, with the death of Mrs Hassall, the heir Thomas leased the property and the house.



**The Hassall House at 109 George Street in 1870**  
(S. & K. Brown, *Parramatta: A town caught in time, 1870*)

In the 1880s the family decided to sell the land. The auction of the Hassall Estate, Parramatta was held on 30 September 1882. The building materials on lots 9 to 11, and 16 to 18, which included the main house, were sold to C. E. Fuller for £101. C. E. Fuller was the proprietor of Fuller's Lightning Printing Works of Parramatta and was the compiler, publisher and printer of *Fuller's County of Cumberland Directory*, which he issued from 1882 onwards. The building materials on lots 12 and 13 were sold to Michael Hagen for £17.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Archaeologists record buried evidence because we believe it will help us understand more about the history of Australia. To understand the information being recorded we need to have a number of research questions. Some of the ones being asked at this site are about:

#### Free Life in Colonial Parramatta

- What differences were there between the lives of free or forced (convict) or institutionalised settlers.

- Nature of early agricultural practices, evidence for dairying etc. Address this issue through both the analysis of archaeological features as well as through analysis of early pottery and pollen samples.
- Pottery was manufactured in both Parramatta and Sydney but we know very little about pottery at Parramatta, its manufacture and the forms and their uses. Finding more early pottery will increase our knowledge of this important early production.
- Consumption and commerce in colonial Parramatta: what does it tell us about cultural and social practices in colonial Parramatta, relating to lifeways, diet and other issues associated with consumption of goods?

#### Life in the Hassall Household

- The nature of life in this household where the Hassall family lived for about 30 years.
- Evidence for the nature of childhood and the way in which gender identities were constructed.
- The nature of the material culture and consumption patterns of the Hassall family and their servants/staff over a period of about 30 years and how these remains related to the transformation of their environment from rural town and to an urban place.
- The way in which servants lived in this household.
- Layout of the house and outbuildings and how this structured life in the Hassall household.
- Examination of how religious life affected the way of life in the Hassall family. How was it different to convict lives or other settlers in early Parramatta?
- Is there evidence for customary patterns (buildings, food, religious practice, cultural artefacts)?

### REFERENCES

- Casey & Lowe, *Archaeological Assessment 109-George Street, Parramatta* (2003), including detailed history by Terry Kass.
- Terry Kass, Carol Liston, and John McClymont, *Parramatta, A Past Revealed* (1996)
- Evans painting from Rosen 2004, *Government House Parramatta 1788-2000*.

For information on other archaeological projects in Parramatta and elsewhere, see our website: [www.caseyandlowe.com.au](http://www.caseyandlowe.com.au).